FRANK ZAPPA
200 MOTELS
THE SUITES
ESA-PEKKA SALONEN
CONDUCTS
LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE
WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL
23 OCTOBER 2013

200 MOTELS

THE SUITES

1. OVERTURE 2:17
2. WENT ON THE ROAD 1:41
3. CENTERVILLE 2:24
4. THIS TOWN IS A SEALED TUNA SANDWICH 10:15
5. THE RESTAURANT SCENE 4:23
6. TOURING CAN MAKE YOU CRAZY 2:06
7. WHAT'S THE NAME OF YOUR GROUP? 11:46
8. CAN I HELP YOU WITH THIS DUMMY? 2:33
9. THE PLEATED GAZELLE 21:00
10. I'M STEALING THE ROOM 13:44
11. SHOVE IT RIGHT IN 7:26
12. PENIS DIMENSION 9:58
13. FINALE: STRICTLY GENTEEL 11:14

Left to right: James Darrah, FZ, GZ, Andrew Glick, Nixon, Emily MacDonald, Cameron Mock

“The present-day composer refuses to die.” *– Edgard Varèse*

Frank Filipetti
March 6, 2015

Frank Zappa. The name conjures up the most diverse impressions imaginable. For some (including me) he was a genius; for others he was at best an iconoclast, and at worst a writer of "comedy music." Those who got him were privileged to enjoy some of the twentieth century's most enduring music. Those who didn't will most likely realize the error of their ways after a suitable time.

Part of the problem is that Frank was clearly indefinable. Many people have a real problem with that. They find it necessary to categorize anything other than themselves. It makes it easier for us in this complicated world to compartmentalize everything outside of our own little circle. When things don't fit into our ordered universe we become suspicious of others' intentions and motivations.

Was he just a charlatan only interested in pushing buttons? Even if button pushing was the motivation, there can be no question that the notes he put to paper were not only brazenly artistic, but to any but the most jaded, fraught with genius.

In our dualistic view of the cosmos, most of us look either from the inside out, or from the outside in. The micro view allows us to viscerally control all the little slings and arrows that lie in wait. The macro view leaves us at the behest of an uncontrollable and seemingly uncaring universe. Very few of us can freely move from the micro to the macro, and even fewer still have access to the glue that binds them. Albert Einstein did. He revised forever the separation of the inner and outer cosmos.

Frank did the same with music. He forever dashed the separation of the sacred and the profane; the cosmic and the trivial; the macro and the micro. Einstein made it very clear that he was serious about what he was doing. Frank insisted on keeping us off guard regarding his intentions. For many, rather than allowing themselves to be duped by someone who may have been trying to take the piss out of us, it is often easier to simply dismiss his work as that of a puerile rabble-rouser.

But when you look behind the ferociously brilliant, but to some, "objectionable" lyrics, and delve deeply into the music, his genius, and yes, his seriousness, is undeniable. This work, the restored orchestral score of 200 Motels, shows this with unerring clarity. The playfulness in the story is underpinned by an intensely serious and devastatingly musical score. For those of us who were lucky enough to be at Disney Hall on the 23rd of October, 2013, it will remain as defining an experience as Woodstock, or our first hearing of Bernstein's West Side Story, or Stravinsky's Rite of Spring.

Hyperbole??? Not in my mind. Frank succeeded in bringing the most disparate elements of twentieth century music; from classical to jazz to rock, and yes, even pop, into an incredibly cohesive whole.

To have been honored by Gail Zappa to bring this experience to you, will always remain one of the great moments of my lifetime.

When we decided to record this monumental work, Gail and I had a number of questions to answer. The 800-pound gorilla sitting in the corner of the room was the cost. This was going to be an enormous risk, first and foremost, because the guiding light of this work was no longer here to provide his inspiration and wisdom. But with the extraordinary Esa-Pekka Salonen leading the production, we knew we were in confident hands…musically! From a recording perspective, however, I certainly had never before attempted anything this complex.

The sheer scale of the production was frightening. 200 Motels - The Suites, as envisioned by Gail Zappa with Kurt Morgan, was to consist of a little over one hundred minutes of nearly continuous music. Frank's score specified an expanded orchestra with nine complete percussion sections, double the standard brass and woodwinds, 3 pianos, 3 classical guitars, a rock band, a massed choir, and twelve principal singers…mobile…moving (very carefully) around the already over-crowded stage.

And, of course, there was the concern that due to a very truncated rehearsal schedule and a one night only performance, would we even have something CD worthy. It certainly was one of the most terrifying, yet exhilarating moments of my professional life. With Salonen's expert guidance, and the amazing performances provided by the principal singers, the night was an unparalleled success. The orchestra was grand, the chorus – superb, the instrumental soloists were on their game, and the principals were breathtaking.

The emotional high for all of who had the privilege to attend this event was palpable. Because this was a live event with only one recorded performance we soon realized that there would be few if any opportunities to fix or tune anything. The vocal performances managed to find themselves in every open mic on the stage (and there were nearly 200 of them). Such is the nature of these events. So Gail and I decided that this concert would be presented "warts and all." There are no vocal tunings anywhere on this recording. These performances, as amazing as they are, are as they were performed live. There are four very minor edits in the orchestra dealing with instrumentalists who came in one bar too early or late. In a score filled with exotic time signatures and daringly complex orchestration, these very minor exceptions were fixed only to keep the emotion of the piece in check.

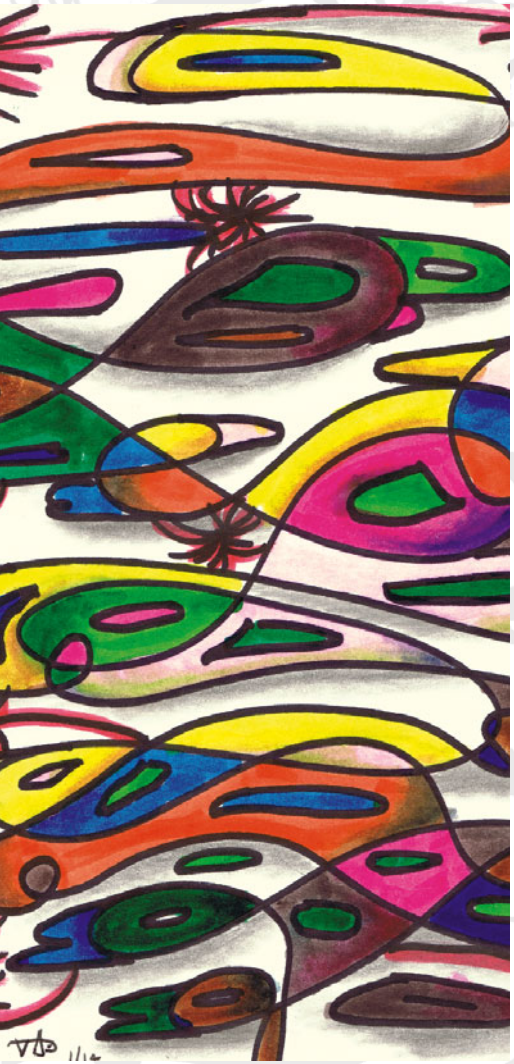
You will also notice a great deal of extraneous sounds throughout the piece. Once again, this was a live performance with actors moving about the stage - not stuck to a microphone - and you will hear their movements throughout. It became clear from the start of the mix that without an alternate take or performance available, trying to remove them caused more harm than good.

My desire, along with Gail's, was to provide you with an incredible emotional journey, courtesy of the genius of Frank Zappa, as it was experienced by those privileged few who got to be there on that magical night.

Gail Zappa
August 29, 2015

The stars aligned - in the Vault of All Ideas and in the canopy over the main stage at Disney Hall. Among the things I have to say at the very least is this: we all did the best we could considering FZ was not here and yet somehow he was. But as much as the performers brought his spirit into the hall with them so did the audience. I am not a musician. But I was part of a much smaller group. I was the wife of a composer. Although Frank was also a rock and roll guitar player, a bandleader, a record producer, a lyricist and songwriter, an artist and performer, he was a composer first, last and always in the time that I had with him. To have succeeded in producing this event and this recording I can now confirm the privilege of having worked with extraordinary talents and in the end, with *almost* effortless ease. I have earned the right to say almost. In order to accomplish this I had to step way back - way back out of the way of not only myself but all of the experience of everyone who had "been there" in some respect - been where I had not. And in retropect, the only way to do it was one step at a time. Like building a score, one note at a time. And just breathe. The light comes in with each inspiration. And it becomes a dance with every single person working toward what is happening on that stage when the audience is in the room. Whether you are holding a baton or an instrument or a page of music in your hand. Everyone is listening and this recording is not only the audio of what we heard with our ears. For me there is so much more and it is my honor to share it with you here. With Glorious Gratitude!!!

Pinewood, 1971



Scott Thunes
March 6, 2015

My time with Frank Zappa was mostly spent in rehearsals or on the road. I woke up in the efficiency-apartment bed and/or hotel and made my way, eventually, to a room that contained one Frank Zappa plus a number – small or large – of other humans. But every one of those rooms had a Frank Zappa in it. You knew it. It changed you for better or worse, and you shifted your viewpoint accordingly. At least I did. I always thought there were those of us who "did" and a much larger number who "didn't".

I don't know if he enjoyed that fact or not, but I enjoyed my being scared, amazed, delighted, and/or worried because of it. A lot.

For a few weeks in 1986, I lived up at "the house". I was asked to do something with his eldest, Dweezil, in the musical realm, and I had no place to stay (not having lived in LA for quite some time). Strangely, he wasn't willing to pay to have me stay at a hotel during my efforts so he let me and my then-girlfriend stay in one of the two 'apartments' in the back of his house.

Much like cabanas, they were built next to the pool. The one I got to stay in had a full-shower bathroom: The shower-head poked out of the wall of a small bathroom and there was a drain in the floor. A metal cover kept the toilet paper dry and you'd just blast the whole thing with water: toilet, self, and all. I consider it my favorite bathroom in the world to this day and wish to create one similar before I die.

Yes, I know, it seems that this infrastructure innovation is the only take-away from my 7 years working with Frank, but I also had many lovely interactions with him, mostly of the learning variety. Very few were 'official' in the sense that he'd say something important and my band life would change or be refined somehow. Mostly, though, it was hanging out. Either on the road or at his house. The London Symphony Orchestra album listening party that I brought my now-deceased brother, Derek, to, where he berated Frank - one composer to another - for 'doing anything else with his time' other than composing when 'you can do this' (as he held up the score to Sad Jane after following along to it in the control room). Frank said "I like hanging out". Never thought I'd hear those words coming from 'a Frank Zappa.'

One time, late at night after a rehearsal during the '88 tour, I asked him "whither music?" He was (as the kiddies say) all, like, "huh?" I told him a little story of my life in music, my thoughts about the music of our time – pop and classical – and I wanted his thoughts on EVERYTHING but mostly what I should do, maybe after I became an 'adult' (I was 28, still quite immature and full of unfocusable energy). I probably went on for about 15 minutes (if memory serves).

My favorite moment in my life up to the point of meeting my wife, Georgia, and having our children, will always be that late-night "answer" which (if memory serves) went on for at least 3 hours. My memories of Frank always contain this factlet: He was the fairest man I ever met. Spending his off-hours with an employee, helping him in his private life to get a grip on reality, it still gives me shivers to recall his spirit and attitude. It made the two or three non-positive interactions I had with him in previous years dissipate into non-existence.

Unfortunately, memory doesn't serve, and I've never recalled the content of this answer, but only what I took away from it: An urge to go forward into the adventure of music with open eyes and a sense of wonder. I guess I never took any of his advice, except for that one tidbit: Compose something and try and get other humans to play it. I had an 'unrealistic' view of that area of music ('real' composing) and he wanted me to put my fantasy-life away and prepare for the struggles attendant with score realization (getting notes off the paper into your ear). He was right. My string duo remains, to this day, unplayed (composed in 1993).

Unfortunately, for the most part, the music I've been involved with post-Frank has had very little of that wonder and amazement, at least of an FZ-level. But I get to be thrown back into the melee occasionally, thanks to the continued attentions of my pseudo-mother, Gail, who tosses me in the ring with a whoop and a "Go get 'em!"

Because of this, I end up doing things like going to LA and London to work with a massive orchestra playing bass guitar in the music of Frank Zappa.

After getting a call from one Sam Rigby, and agreeing that playing bass – and performing the part of "Jeff"– in the London production of "200 Motels," I discover that LA is doing the same damn thing the week before. Can I do both? Will the schedule work out? It do! It does!

I fly to LA with enough clothes and musical and computer equipment to keep me and the world entertained for three weeks: I have to leave for London immediately after the LA show and do something exactly the same except totally different over there. No going home for a breather between shows/rehearsals.

Fortunately, in this case, it's totally worth it: My LA experience is exemplary. Nice hotel, great performers, Esa-Pekka Salonen, my favorite modern conductor directing the massive forces with wit, charm, and ease. And the music! I don't get to perform the humorous and interesting 'rock' tunes of 200 Motels, but I do get to sit in awe as one of my top-5 Modern Classical works is built up around me, physically enveloping me in shrouds of sound and mayhem in an hour and a half's worth of intricate, delicate, bombastic, impossible, rough, magnificently beautiful, and annoyingly unpleasant music (those last adjectives are reserved for "Jeff"'s nasal noise and attendant accompaniments during the Dental Hygiene Dilemma, something I was actually embarrassed to perform during my London performance of the part. Sorry, Frank. I must have missed that noise the 1000 times I heard DHD during my 'formative' years. I was not ready for it.)

Everybody involved was super-into being there, the chance to spread out and do something off-off-off-off-off Broadway yet somehow bigger and better giving all of us the ability to show what we had and give it our all.

Instead of being asked to play Jeff in LA – that role already went to Joe Fria... I guess he did a good job (jk) – I was offered to perform in the pre-show show, a reading of the court transcripts of the 200 Motels obscenity case that occurred in England after the original performance got canceled. Of course, I was up against two 'real actors' so I felt very strongly that I somehow was lacking in the 'pretending to be a hyper-annuated, barely cognizant English Judge' department, but I wasn't 'rotten tomatoed' so I must not have ruined it. I got to meet and embarrass myself in front of ex-Chequered Past frontman, Michael Des Barres, plus spend a few minutes with Rich Fulcher (and wife) of Thunes-family-adored The Mighty Boosh. He's nice.

Musically, my attentions were divided among several elements: sitting next to Ian Underwood for a week, as he was a hero of mine since I was 12. He was nice. Sitting in the middle of the LA Philharmonic Orchestra, my favorite instrument. They were, for the most part, nice. A couple of the members decided to make a stand against the 'rock band' element and perform their own form of audio mixing (telling me and the guitar player to turn down) and stage design (telling me and the guitar player to move our music stands lower so they could see the conductor. The nerve!) and to ultimately show disdain by giving us stink-eye whenever we accidentally made eye-contact. The choir – The Los Angeles Master Chorale – showed me what real love of music and stage-craft looked like. They were the most technically-proficient group of vocal musicians I've ever had the pleasure of being in the same room with, and I'm still in shock as to how they were physically able to do what they did, and THEN with all the extra stagecrafty stuff they were charged with. And raise jelly-dildo light-sabres to boot! How DID they manage that trick?! Oh, and they were nice, too.

But mostly, my attentions were focused on Esa-Pekka. If anybody was born to conduct 200 Motels, it was this joker. I've met and seen classical musicians before. Many have great attitudes, some have unbelievable techniques, but I've never met one with the entire package: Charm, kindness, excitement, sexual technique, appreciation for the odder musical adventures, and humor. I wish I was able to get more of his on-podium banter on tape. He could sell a week's worth of tickets to An Evening of 4' 33" (this is a joke. For those who don't know, 4' 33" is a silent piece by composer John Cage. It was also performed by Frank on the tribute album, A Chance Operation: The John Cage Tribute, published in 1993) He's nice. And cute!

The real shocker was watching soprano Hila Plitmann perform brilliantly as The Interviewer, reaching heights of perfection in modern vocal techniques and sheer musical beauty (in addition to her physical attractiveness, accomplished acting chops, and artistic courage and willingness to 'nearly-bare all' for Frank's art) that are exactly and most powerfully representative of what I got into music for in the first place. She was really nice. And she gave me her 'journalist' pen as a souvenir of the event (ok, she left it on stage during her performance and I grabbed it like a little fan-girl)

Also, and more importantly, a Polaroid photograph taken during the performance was brought to her by her 'biggest fan' (me) and an attempt was made to get her to autograph it. Unfortunately, souvenir pen didn't work in the 'signing area' of said photograph and it became a little joke between us: my trying to keep patiently calm standing so close to Hila while she valiantly and eventually failed to make pretty words with said pen. Eventually, she gave up and I, tearfully, walked away with a shitty picture with chicken scratches all over it. But it's mine! All mine! Ahem.

You all know 200 Motels from the record and the movie. Now you'll know it as a brand new, totally-different-yet-the same record and the one-off performance you'll never get the chance to see (unless you were there, of course).

Steve Vai
August 14, 2014

I was 14 when I first saw 200 Motels the movie and soon after got my hands on a copy of the record. A few years later I remember seeing manuscript excerpts of " A Nun Suite Painted on Some Old Boxes" (from 200 Motels) in a music book Frank published.

Frank's hand written music looked like beautiful art and I would hypnotically stare at it while listening to the music in astonishment realizing that every note, every word, every sound was birthed from his unique creative vision and documented in a way that would ensure it's re-performances to be delivered, virtually exactly as the composer had intended, for centuries to come.

I met Frank for the first time at his hotel in New York in December of 1979 and he gave me a copy of the score to "I'm Stealing the Room". This piece was one small excerpt from the masterwork of "200 Motels". Goggling at its magnitude and density gave me my first real glimpse into the profound amount of work that went into the manifestation of the entire 200 Motels extravaganza.

Entering The Disney Hall some 34 years later for the performance of the orchestral vignettes from "200 Motels" conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, and celebrating the halls 10th anniversary, it felt as though a high voltage current of ecstatic electric bliss pervaded every atom of the concert hall.

The stage looked surreal with the props and staging illuminated by vivid hues of Aurora 'Borialisesque' lighting. But when that exquisite bewitching opening overture melody struck there was an aliveness in the notes that saturated our being and swiftly swept us up into the bosom of Frank's enchanting melodic embrace. It's a warm safe place where the feelings of freedom, expansion and humor can liberate one from the doldrums of life's challenges. Sort of like feeling aligned with the currents of wellbeing.

Among the many actors that took part in the proceedings, Joel David Moore played the part of Frank. Even though he was an actor dressed like Frank, when he entered the stage it was a shocking reminder of Frank's monolith-like presence. You could feel the mysterious ethereal, yet commanding omnipresence of Frank's spirit resonating in every note and every space the notes permeated.

If someone schooled in the history of traditional classical music witnessed the spectacle of 200 Motels, I could only imagine they would be stunned at its originality and emancipation from convention. Frank uniquely blends full symphony orchestra, rock band, choir, actors and spoken dialog to express his boundless artistic freedom.

Besides adhering to the conventionalities of strictly written little black dots to be performed by the orchestra musicians, that are usually only trained to read what's written on the paper and who's concept of 'ad libbing' is virtually nil, at times Frank used the animated personality potential of various actors/musicians as part of his instrumentation. This contributes in creating one-of-a-kind freshly inspired moments in every performance. The garish freedom of the music has a tendency to seduce the best out of its performers.

Frank was a young man when he penned these compositions and his youthful zeal is well animated in the subject matter of 200 Motels. No usual taboo subject is off limits. In fact they are boldly exploited and stripped of their pretentious offensiveness revealing the humor under it all. In itself this was liberating for the audience. Think "Penis Dimension".

But one of the most revealing moments in the entire masterpiece is when Frank wrote into the score of "The Pleated Gazelle", "I just wrote down whatever came to mind, I figured I'd never get to hear it anyway". That statement points to the enabling of an opening into unique creativity for it's own sake without any expectations. Inimitable creativity has no expectation, just a desire to be born into the world through a willing suspect.

One might say the reason why Frank was able to create such a vast catalog of highly original and quality music was because the vortex of fresh and alive creativity was perpetually open in him and the birthing of its dictates through him was of absolute importance to him. Whatever happened to the music after that was important but it was of relative importance.

In comparison most people's creative vortex is obscured by their mind noise including everything from egoic desires to be proclaimed brilliant, to fear of failing. But those intentions are incapable of creating anything fresh, alive and new.

At face value 200 Motels may be considered courageous, outrageous, inspired, seminal, humorous, and just plain blow-away, but for Frank it was probably as simple as "I think I'll just do this… because I can and it makes me laugh."

I once asked him what was his favorite thing he ever wrote. I never expected such a choice could be made but he said, and I need to paraphrase a bit here, "The majestic section towards the end of "Strictly Genteel".

And as synchronicity would have it, right at the climax of the show at Disney Hall, that specific section was repeated multiple times while vintage grainy film footage of Frank was projected onto a screen above the stage. This was the first instance during the proceedings where the audience actually sees any real Frank and it was riveting.

With his head buried in a sheet of manuscript paper, hands vigilantly scrawling the secret code of the myriad little black dots… one at a time, and the mighty regal music soaring in the background, time seemed to stand still and reveal an epic depiction of a human being acting as a co-creator with the Universe, of which the foundation is infinite freedom, the action is expansion and the reason is joy.

It was a sacred moment, and now you get to listen to it.

James Darrah
August 24, 2015

This is not a director's liner note.
This is a confession of addiction.
This addiction has nothing to do with drugs.

The famously sober composer of 200 Motels filled his libretto with what could almost literally be read as public service announcements against drug use. The addiction described here is something else all together.

In the process of planning, staging, designing, and rehearsing this premiere, we all became accidentally obsessed — no, addicted — to Zappa. Like the lure of any addiction, there seemed to be an infinite pull to unearth the man from within his handwritten, meticulously transcribed full score. The cast has all accumulated several sleepless nights, unable to pull themselves from the web of Zappa-induced YouTube chains. Upon receiving the assignment, video designer Adeline Newmann promptly ran to Amoeba Records, decimating the Frank Zappa section to giddily complete her collection. During our first meeting in Frank's home recording studio in the Hills, the inimitable Gail Zappa generously overloaded my brain with priceless insights as well as literally filling my arms with commercial and unreleased recordings; an initial, vigorous push toward my own dissolution into Zappa Addict.

200 Motels is not a subtle evening of music— no, theater— no, film— opera? The piece is as hard to categorize as the man himself; its scope is almost as sprawling as the nearly antithetical quality of his life's work. Zappa certainly wasn't concerned with following the conventions of any medium. Regardless of his autobiographical references, 200 Motels contains little in the vein of a linear narrative. With that in mind, it was never the goal of this production to attempt to recreate the environments of the film by the same name, nor prescribe a plot upon the often fantastical musings of the "libretto." We have, instead, taken heady cues from the emotional texture of the piece and used a trove of first hand evidence toward what Zappa might have been after with this monsterwork. The balance of these two elements—the concrete score with the abstract man—has been our goal or addiction. The specificity from the composer of his required visual landscapes, live onstage cameras, and the absolute instruction of music making props combined with a vast vacancy of how to implement those ideas is the thing we're now hooked on.

At a certain point in this process it became clear that judgment was not a worthwhile tool. As this production team, orchestra, audience and, even the concert hall itself, come to this work from professional avenues profound in their histories and traditions, it could have been easy for all of us to squint our eyes at Zappa's composition with something like skepticism. Each of our reactions seem to run a wide range: from appalled and vehemently dismissive to fanatically elated. In fact, Zappa's work seems to elicit a dramatic range of visceral reactions. If people have an opinion: it's a strong one. We each learned to take 200 Motels for what it is: a large-scale experiment by a wizard in his prime. At its core, 200 Motels is an act of artistic bravery.

The manifold personality of Frank Zappa looms large in this work, in these characters, in these sounds and, now, in this space. His individuality colored every choice we made tonight: the shades of neon, the impossibility of casting, the placement of phallic percussion. This work is the product of a man addicted to creation. This evening is the product of that addiction passed on.

ZAPPA
RECORDS
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Joe Travers
October 2, 2014

Being asked to participate in this special 200 Motels event became yet another on the list of "Dreams Come True" I've experienced since being involved with the Zappa Family Trust. I first acquired the 200 Motels vinyl soundtrack as a Christmas gift in the early 80's, a French re-issue. I did not receive the original booklet, so the only visual reference I had for the experience was the pictures on the L.P. jacket. I had never seen the film. This left so much to the imagination… what could possibly be going on in the film to accompany this most peculiar and unique music? Although I had heard some classical music by my age, I was roughly 14 years old, I had never heard anything like 200 Motels before. Eventually the movie was issued on VHS by MGM and I finally got to see the mystery movie by my then new hero. But I would have never imagined that later in life I would actually be playing drum set with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra performing some of these pieces. A total mind blower for sure. To add to the experience, I was in a rhythm section with two of Frank's past band members and legends in my mind, Ian Underwood & Scott Thunes, alongside veteran musicians Jamie Kime and Randy Kerber. There was a warm feeling between us all, knowing we were a part of something truly epic, something we'll all keep as a musical highlight forever.

As if that weren't enough, a situation sprang up that offered an opportunity that I wasn't counting on or prepared for. There is a section of "The Restaurant Scene" that went by "Piano/Drum Duet". This small piece, albeit short, is deceivingly difficult in true Frank Zappa fashion. Ian, over the years, was the piano player to have played it, originally in Mothers concerts (as released on You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 5) and in the original 200 Motels film from 1971. Art Tripp and Ruth Underwood were the only drum set players that I know of to play this particular piece with Ian. The drum set part for the 200 Motels/LA Phil 2013 performance was issued to the orchestral drum set player. I was the "Rock" rhythm section drum set player, so I was not responsible for this piece. Because of the placements of the instruments stage plot, the orchestral drum set was a part of the percussion section which was located in the back row, by the choir. The rock rhythm section was placed front and center, right in front of conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen. This posed a problem for Ian during the Piano/Drum duet as the orchestral drummer was too far away for them to properly hear each other and to connect on the piece. Ian's remedy for this issue was to have ME learn the piece and play it with him since I was basically right next to him. I was overcome with anxiety and fear: I would have required weeks of preparation to play it correctly and I just didn't have that kind of time as the performance was in about 4 days. At first I declined, but then I thought about it hard. I figured this was a one shot deal, I'm being asked to play this piece with the only piano player to ever have played it, I grew listening to this stuff and now I have this opportunity to perform it with the legend. I had to go for it. So, I went that night to the UMRK Zappa studio and basically consumed myself with practicing the piece. Ian was kind enough to schedule a 4-hour rehearsal on our day off to work on the piece with me, something I'll never forget. Lo and Behold, we managed to play it, almost mistake-free for the performance. I felt so blessed to be a part of the whole experience and I 'm forever grateful to Gail Zappa for believing in me and including me in so many wonderful projects over the years. This one, could just be "The Big One". Now you the listener can share in this with all of us. Here is to another performance someday soo

Michael Des Barres
March 12, 2015

The magnitude of that magic night at Disney Hall with Frank Zappa's Spirit hovering over us, his joyous and imperious smile illuminating an army of humble servants, was on a frequency I have never experienced.

His music played by one of the world's greatest orchestras, his words sung and spoken by committed, brilliant singers and actors conducted by the Maestro Salonen was mind and body blowing. Frank would have demanded the distinction.

The energy from the Zappa afficionados' feverish expectance fueled us all with a united energy never experienced by any of us before or since. Finally at the triumphant curtain call his image beamed on the backdrop of this wonderful electric church. Diva quietly wept as she turned from a cheering crowd to see her father smiling. She turned back to the audience where her mother looked lovingly into her daughter's eyes with a celebratory soulful smile.

200 Motels and a 1000 light years had passed and we left that once in a lifetime moment with love in our hearts and deafening appreciation of Frank Zappa's monumental posthumous triumph ringing in our ears.

Diva Zappa
March 14, 2015

I remember walking into the hall for the first time. It was completely empty except for those of us rehearsing. My cohort Sheila Vand and I stood on the stage and shouted "PENIS" as loud as we could. The word hit the back of the hall and we laughed.

I love that I had the opportunity to be ridiculous on a very proper stage. I think my dad would have liked the contrast. It was very emotional for me to be part of this. As I get older and experience the art, music, creations, writings, humour, musicianship, talent, brilliance…… of my father, I miss him more and yet I am filled with such light in my heart because knowing and experiencing all of that brings me closer to him. He is so present.

As the last notes of "Strictly Genteel" played I remember seeing the video of my dad projected behind me and crying. It was a beautiful night. Everyone on that stage could feel that Frank, my Dad, was there with us. We all shined for him and because of him. Thank you, big giant heartfelt thankyous to EVERYONE who was on that stage and in that hall. It wouldn't have happened like that if we all didn't show up.

Peter Asher
August 2, 2014

This was an utterly extraordinary event in the literal meaning of the term.

That much would have been clear even to someone hearing the music for the very first time and reveling in its complexity and its wit, its grooves and its humour.

But to those of us in the audience with a historical perspective (i.e. old!) it was significant beyond measure.

I knew Frank back in the day – I remember interviewing him (with some trepidation!) for our London-based hippie newspaper, The International Times; it turned out that he was more interested in interviewing me about what it was like to be a pop star! And later (after we had become friends) attending an orchestral recording session in Los Angeles which a fairly scruffy Frank was conducting. As the session began, the wave of dismissive contempt for this apparently casual maestro coming from the orchestra was palpable – but so was the astonishment and rapid (if begrudging) revision of attitude as soon as they realized the depth and accuracy of Frank's musical perspicacity and the brilliance of his charts.

But last October at Disney Hall the initial attitude could not possibly have been more different. The orchestra were clearly thrilled to be there and to be playing the work of a master composer. One of the most important and brilliant conductors of the modern era was a visibly delighted fan. And yet Frank's acerbic, demanding, unimpressed and irreverent genius was conceptually omnipresent – he was not demanding respect or attention but simply (and as always) the right notes, impeccable time, Swiftian humour, joyful participation and legendary performances. And he got them; each and every one, from a stunning production, a great (and fun-loving!) orchestra, an inspired conductor, a brilliant cast and a wildly delighted audience.

All of us lucky enough to have been there thank Frank for his genius and thank Gail Zappa and Frank Filipetti for creating this invaluable record of a great evening and this irrepressibly entertaining tribute to one of the true masters of 20th Century music.

Esa-Pekka Salonen

A lauded composer and world-renowned conductor, Esa-Pekka Salonen has a restless innovation that marks him as one of the most important artists in classical music. Salonen is currently the Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia Orchestra and Conductor Laureate for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009.

Trained in the austere world of European modernism and enjoying a close relationship with the sunny city of Los Angeles, Salonen composes works that move freely between contemporary idioms, combining intricacy and technical virtuosity with playful rhythmic and melodic innovations. Three major retrospectives of Salonen's original work have been heard by capacity audiences and received critical acclaim: at Festival Présences Paris in 2011; at the Stockholm International Composer Festival in 2004; and at Musica Nova, Helsinki, in 2003. Salonen has completed several works for symphony orchestra, including Foreign Bodies (2001), Insomnia (2002), and Wing on Wing, which received its world premiere at Walt Disney Concert Hall in 2004. In 2007 Salonen conducted the New York Philharmonic in the first performance of his Piano Concerto, dedicated to Yefim Bronfman, who also premiered it. The 2014-2015 season will find him as the first-ever Creative Chair at the Tonhalle Zurich Orchestra, which has commissioned a new piece for orchestra and chorus from him and will perform nine other Salonen pieces throughout the season.

Salonen's extensive recording career includes a CD of his orchestral works performed by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, which he also conducted, as well as a disc of his Piano Concerto and his works Helix and Dichotomie. A new album of one of Henri Dutilleux's most important works recorded with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in the presence of the composer was released in 2013 on Deutsche Grammophon on the composer's 97th birthday. That same month, Sony completed a recording project that began with Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic nearly 30 years ago: a 2-disc set of the orchestral works of Lutosławski, released in what would have been the composer's 100th year. In 2012 he recorded a disc of Saariaho's Passion De Simone with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Dawn Upshaw. 2012 also saw the release of the first-ever recording of Shostakovich's previously undiscovered opera prologue Orango with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the release of Out of Nowhere, a collection of his Violin Concerto and Nyx,featuring Leila Josefowicz and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. In 2009 a new collaboration with Signum was launched with the release of a live recording of Schoenberg's Gurrelieder; other recent recordings with the Philharmonia on Signum include Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique and Mahler's Sixth and Ninth symphonies.

esapekkasalonen.com @esapekkasalonen

Kurt Morgan
August 28, 2015

Baaaa dada daaa! … Bum bum bum bum!! … dada dat! …

The gibberish above is nothing more than a series of low-budget phonetic corruptions used to serve as crude symbols of the opening motives of the **Overture** in **200 MOTELS: The Suites**. It tells you virtually nothing about the actual music aside from a few vague impressions. It is childish, absurd, and a complete waste of costly liner-note real-estate. It should also be stated that the coincidental occurrences of the word "dada" in the aforementioned gibberish should be viewed as such - complete and utter coincidences.

Back to the plot. I feel very honored to be one of the people that helped to make this recording a reality. At the request of Gail Zappa, it was my task to ensure that the score and parts that were given to the LA Phil reflected the composer's intent exactly. To me, this meant that every pitch, every notated rhythm, every instrumental indication, and every other marking that was made by FZ in his original manuscripts should be transferred to the new score. Nothing would be changed. Every idiosyncrasy of FZ's way of notating music would be reproduced, right down to the beaming of notes and the layouts of the pages themselves. The job took almost two years for me to complete.

At 311 pages, the full score is an imposing stack of paper and it contains some of the densest and most beautiful collections of little black dots that I have ever seen. I was constantly reminded of how funny this music is by looking at the manuscripts. For example, there is a moment in **The Pleated Gazelle** where the members of the chorus sing a chord but instead of having them sing the same word, FZ has them sing three different words at once. The Basses and Baritones sing "MOO," the Tenors sing "BUNG," and the Altos sing "EE." Another moment occurs at the beginning of **Can I Help You With This Dummy?** when the Bass soloist sings a motive that ends on the B-flat two octaves and a whole step below middle-C. Immediately following this nearly subsonic note (the same note that Mahler forced the Basses to sing in the 5th Movement of his 2nd Symphony), FZ indicates in the score that the soloist "clears his throat" and then he has him sing the motive in a slightly more comfortable range.

There are passages of music in the score that evoke Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* and others that sound like they could have been written by Varése. There is also a moment that sounds like a quote from *Night on Bald Mountain* by Modest Mussorgsky, at least to my ears. This occurs in **The Pleated Gazelle**, which also contains one of my favorite parts of **200 MOTELS: The Suites**. After the Soprano soloist delivers her Dada Sprechstimme Mutations on the word "gazelle," the FRANK character recites the following:

"Some people might wonder why a person might want to write something like this… It's not pretty and it doesn't make any sense at all… but that didn't matter to me while I was writing it… I just wrote down whatever came to mind… I figured I'd never get to hear it anyway."

I adore this passage. I am inspired by the freedom that FZ gives to his own imagination and the courage with which he defends it. I think that you can hear this clearly in the music of **200 MOTELS: The Suites** and throughout all of FZ's work.

Thank you to Gail Zappa for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this project, for giving me the official title of "Scoremeister," and for all the responsibilities that it entails. Thank you to Frank Zappa for writing the best music I have ever heard.

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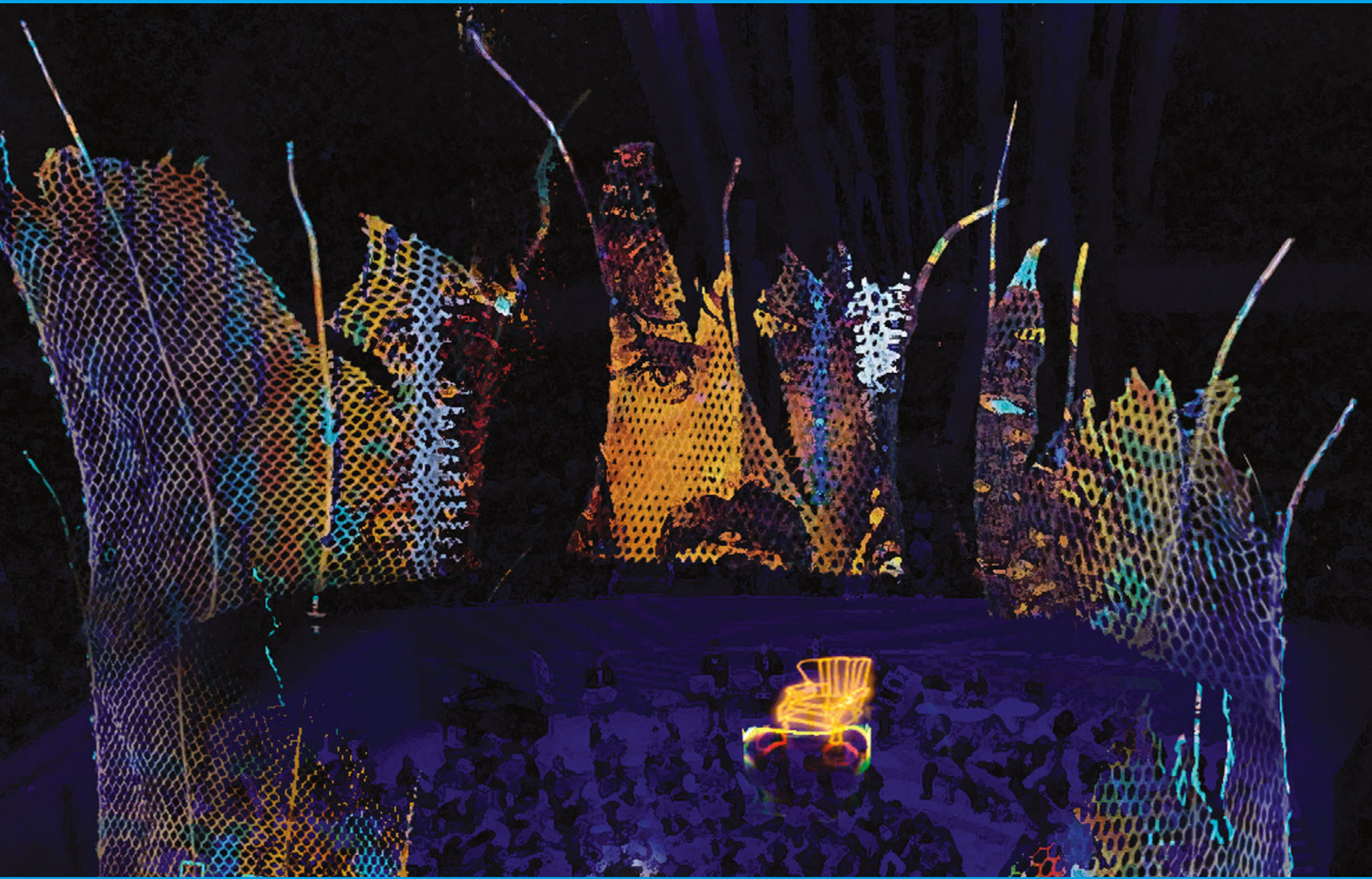

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